States' appearing in the 'Indian Express' dated the 11th January, 2003; and

(b) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken by Government to fix responsibility for non-implementation of food policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government makes available foodgrains to the State Governments/UTs for distribution under TPDS and other welfare schemes, such as, Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Sampoorna Gramin Rozgaar Yojana, Mid-day Meal Scheme, Food for Work Programme. The responsibility of implementing these schemes is with the State Governments/UT Administrations.

Starvation deaths

1595. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Public Hearing on Hunger reveals many are still dieing without food" appearing in the 'Times of India' dated the 11th January, 2003;

(b) the existing schemes to tackle such situations; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to prevent such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. To ensure the availability of foodgrains to the public at affordable prices, particularly to the people Below the Poverty Line (BPL), Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was launched.

In December, 2002, Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) was launched wherein beneficiaries have been identified and are being supplied foodgrains at the most affordable price, *i.e.*, rice @ Rs. 3/-per kg. and

wheat @ Rs. 2/- per kg. The scale of allocation to all categories of population under TPDS has been enhanced to 35 kg. per family per month with effect from 1.4.2002.

Storage cost of wheat

†1596. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the storage cost of wheat, per tonne in Punjab, Haryana, U.P. and Rajasthan, separately;

(b) whether uniform storage charges are paid to all the agencies by Government all over the country; and

(c) whether this cost is even less than the storage cost of FCI in the above States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) to (c) For the Rabi Marketing Season 2002-03 a uniform storage cost @ Rs. 25.80 per tonne per month has provisionally been allowed to various States, including Punjab, Haryana. U.P. and Rajasthan which procure wheat for the Central Pool.

The above provisional storage cost allowed to the States is lower than the storage cost of FCI for storing foodgrains. However, the final rates are sanctioned to the State Governments in consultation with the respective State Governments on the basis of audited accounts of the year furnished by them after the marketing season is over.

Public distribution system offtake

1597. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether most of the Public Distribution System offtake is restricted to six major States;

(b) whether it is a fact that about two third of Government's food subsidy comprises the transportation, storage and distribution costs;

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†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.